

CLAIMANTS UNITE



CLAIMANTS NEWSPAPER NUMBER 10

SS STAFF TO STRIKE !

THE CIVIL AND PUBLIC SERVANTS ASSOCIATION (CPSA) ARE PLANNING TO GO ON STRIKE. 'CLAIMANTS UNITE' WAS TOLD ABOUT THIS SOME WEEKS AGO AND ON THE DAY OF GOING TO PRESS CPSA NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OFFICIALLY STATED THAT IT WAS ASKING ITS MEMBERS TO CONSIDER A ONE DAY STRIKE AND LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT ON NOVEMBER 17.



They have also decided to extend their selective overtime ban to cover all offices. This strike is about the working conditions in the DHSS - conditions which have drastically deteriorated as the number of staff is cut and the number of claimants increases. By their industrial action the SS staff will be taking a lead in the fight against the cuts and unemployment.

Although the National Executive is going through the motions of asking all its members to consider this action, some branches are already talking about going on strike whatever the national decision - in particular, Newcastle and North London.

CONTINUED ON PAGE TEN

holes on the dole

THIS EXCLUSIVE PICTURE REVEALS CLAIMANTS HOLIDAYING IN GIBRALTAR AND THE COACH WHICH TOOK SOME OF US THERE.

Loath as we are to disappoint the right wing gutter press, we ought to say that the Gibraltar in question was Gibraltar Farm, Morecambe Bay.

The sun shone, it was very cheap and a good time was had by all. There are some more holiday snaps filling up odd holes in this edition. We will be camping again next summer. Why don't you come too?

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C U MEMBERS VICTIMISED

PAT AND RICHARD, TWO MEMBERS OF BATLEY CLAIMANTS UNION, HAVE BEEN BANNED FROM SUPPORTING FELLOW CLAIMANTS AT THEIR LOCAL SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE - other CU members are being refused interviews with Pat and Richard present. The CU Movement calls for all claimants to support Batley CU in their struggle for the right to 'represent' each other.

In an explanation given by the CPSA in Dewsbury, with the "full agreement" of the Society of Civil Servants (the SS managers union), they stated that their counter staff were being "harrassed and humiliated" by certain CU members. This is false! The reason Pat has been banned dates back three years. It is because he has repeatedly made a stand against SS attempts to force him into sweated labour jobs which paid below the poverty level. And Richard was banned, not for harrassing 'staff', but for arguing with the manager when the SS left a woman and three kids starving.

As Batley CU say: "The collusion between CPSA and DHSS management is obvious. We have written evidence also that the Regional Controller fanned up CPSA grievances into a pay and conditions issue (which is all they seem to care about anyway). We have written letters to Barbara Castle, our regional office and the CPSA nationally and have even asked our MP to arrange a solution. All we have received is evasions, ending in a reply from the DHSS Joint Parliamentary Under Secretary of State saying he was hoping for a meeting between the NFCU and CPSA nationally. But CPSA in London will only meet us on the condition that any decisions taken would be binding on local CUs while at the same time local CPSA branches are "free to determine their own attitudes towards Claimants Unions."

"We discussed this proposal at the last NFCU conference and rejected it because we would be entering centralised, bureaucratic negotiations (from a position of weakness).

So we consulted a solicitor who got Counsel's opinion which supported our case, and so after a single claimant was refused to be 'allowed' to claim SS in February, we have maintained him at

collective expense, and he is taking the DHSS to the High Court for an Order of Mandamus to claim supplementary benefit with a representative of his choice.

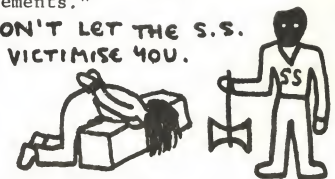
This issue affects all working class people. It is significant that this attack on the CU via two of our more forthright members should come at a time when the SS system is squeezed under the pressure of cuts and more unemployment. The whole thing is a deliberate conspiracy to attack claimants. Other CU members here are worried that if they hold demonstrations (once thought to be a democratic right in this country), distribute leaflets or make uncompromising representation...then they too will be banned.

The legal proceedings will be in London some time in the Autumn - date and place not yet known. It's really an attempt to establish the right of CUs to exist as far as representation goes. We don't really expect much from ruling class justice but a specific ban over specific aggro at a specific interview is one thing - a general discriminatory ban is quite another. Neither DHSS nor CPSA has the right to usurp the rules of natural justice in this way.

It is interesting that Henry Hodge, the CPAG solicitor happened to have a friend in court when it went for "leave" to bring the case to High Court - the Lord Justice (Widgery) was not sympathetic apparently. CPAG wrote to us to ask us to drop the case because if we lose, then social workers and welfare rights officers will lose their "rights" to represent.

We have no intention of dropping the case, but as we discussed at the Newcastle NFCU conference, we shall not win without wider working class support. It is vital to get grass roots support and to spread awareness of this as one example of the repression of claimants among the working class movements."

**DON'T LET THE S.S.
VICTIMISE YOU.**



TOKEN TROUBLE



The price of milk went up by 1p a pint on 1st September so that a social security milk token is now worth 66½p a week. When a child reaches his or her fifth birthday the scale rates increase by 65p a week - but you lose your free milk tokens. This means a decrease in real income of 1½p a week on your kid's fifth birthday.

In a letter to a Claimants Union member in July 1975 Barbara Castle stated that "it has been generally accepted by successive governments that the cost of maintaining a child increases with the age of the child". The Government bases the scale rates on the Family Expenditure Survey and there is no reason to believe that there has been a sudden discovery that 5 to 10 year olds cost 1½p LESS to keep than under fives.

When the Welfare State was introduced, free milk and orange juice were acclaimed as an integral part of the scheme. Healthy children were an investment for the future. Over the past ten years, politicians have ignored warnings from nutritionists and shown a penny pinching attitude towards the wellbeing of their future labour force. Diseases caused by calcium deficiency (caused by lack of milk), eg. rickets, have returned after a 20 year absence when milk was freely available.

Rumour has it that the DHSS are considering abolishing milk tokens. Despite the stigma of vouchers of any sort, we know from experience that once a scheme of this sort is taken away we always end up worse off. Cash instead of tokens would only be of use until the next increase in the price of milk (which has gone up by 30% in 15 months) - and the DHSS has never yet allowed for an automatic increase in benefit when the price of a single commodity has gone up, so they're hardly likely to do so for milk.

It is time that the provisions made for children under the supplementary benefits scheme were drastically changed. Free school meals are well known for their humiliation potential and unless you live in an official deprived area are non-existent during school holidays. After six weeks of demands for ice cream and bottles of pop and swimming pool money plus having to provide an extra meal, parents would rather have extra money during the holidays and the term time.

The child benefit scheme could be used to cover the cost of both milk and school meals for all parents. Child benefits should be large enough to allow for these to be paid for out of it and still leave enough for all the other needs of the child. They should increase automatically with any increase in the cost of living, and CHILD BENEFITS SHOULD NOT BE DEDUCTED FROM SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT.



working women's charter

THE WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER CAMPAIGN has developed from the Women's Movement to campaign for the rights of women in employment. Although the percentage of women within the labour force is slowly increasing, it is still impossible for large numbers of women to go out to work - and even if they do they still have the housework to return home to. Without adequate childcare facilities, paid maternity leave, free and safe abortion and contraception, and socialised housework, women do not have the right to ~~choose~~ to be employed regardless of what the Sex Discrimination and the Equal Pay Act might say. The Working Women's Charter is active among the grass roots of the trade union movement campaigning to get its demands adopted. It recognises that discrimination can only be eradicated by women organising themselves within the unions and localities around specific demands in an attempt to fight against the backward and chauvinistic ideas which presently exist within the labour movement and to fight the many attacks that are being made on women, eg. the cuts in the social wage. The demands of the WWCC have already been adopted by several trade unions and trades councils.

The latest Dept of Employment figures showed a large increase in the number of women unemployed. Many women alternate between claiming and low paid employment. Women claimants are slowly organising to fight discrimination within the social security system, to fight the cohabitation rule and the head of the household rule. We have to join with women in employment to fight all discrimination - in the home, in the factory and at the SS office. The Charter is in the process of being amended but all amendments have to be ratified by the TUs, TCs, and local WWC groups which already support it. Many of the amendments specifically apply to claimants, eg. it is proposed that no.2 should be amended to read: "The rate for the job, regardless of sex or race. For a national minimum wage. For this national minimum wage, and all benefits and wages, to be fully protected against inflation by automatic increases based on a working class cost of living index." and no. 10 should be amended to: "Child benefits to be increased to £5 for each child now.

Benefits to be protected against inflation and to be tax-free, and non-deductable from social security, supplementary and insurance benefits".

We will print all the amendments to the Charter in the next issue (lack of space prevents us printing both here) but this is how it stands at present:

1. The right of women to work. Security of employment for part-time and casual workers.
2. The rate for the job, regardless of sex, at rates negotiated by the trades unions, with a national minimum wage below which no wages should fall.
3. Equal opportunity of entry into occupations and in promotion, regardless of sex and marital status.
4. Equal education and training for all occupations and compulsory day release for all 16-19 year olds in employment.
5. Working conditions to be, without deterioration of previous conditions, the same for women as for men.
6. The removal of all legal and bureaucratic impediments to equality, eg. with regard to tenancies, mortgages, pension schemes, taxation, passports, control over children, social security payments, hire-purchase agreements.
7. Improved provisions of local authority day nurseries, free of charge, with extended hours to suit working mothers.
8. 18 weeks maternity leave with full nett pay spread before and after the birth of a live child; 7 weeks after birth if the child is stillborn. No dismissal during pregnancy and maternity leave. No loss of security, pension or promotion prospects.
9. Family planning clinics supplying free contraception to be extended to cover every locality, Free abortion to be readily available.
10. Family allowances to be increased to £2.50 per child including the first child.
11. To campaign amongst women to take an active part in the trade unions and in political life so that they may exercise influence commensurate with their numbers and to campaign amongst trade unionists that they may work to achieve this aim.

Further information about the Working Women's Charter Campaign can be obtained from 49 Lowther Hill, London SE23. Individual claimants can affiliate to the Campaign for £1.50 and a rate can be negotiated for CUs to affiliate.

DIVIDED IRELAND



Troops Out Now!

5

A member of East Ham Claimants Union is to represent the All London Federation of Claimants Unions on a National Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland (North and South) from September 18-21. This fact raises two issues: Firstly, what is the Troops Out Movement (the organisers of the delegation)? And why should the Claimants Union Movement be interested in the Irish Question? T.O.M.'s line on Ireland is best expressed in its Alternative White Paper on Ireland (available from Rising Free 142 Drummond St London NW1). One sentence in particular sums it up "We call upon the broad Labour Movement in Britain to mobilise to force the Labour Party to break with its bipartisan role on Northern Ireland with the Tories. Labour can solve the Irish problem but only by withdrawing British troops and allowing the Irish people to settle their own affairs."

T.O.M.'s justification for this is based on an historical analysis of the setting up of the 'Orange State' and on a realistic appraisal of its future as long as the troops remain. Ireland has been physically divided for over half a century. It was divided to appease Northern Unionists who refused to join a united Ireland freed of English rule. Originally all nine counties of Ulster were to be partitioned but that would have meant an equal number of Catholics and Protestants. Ensuring that Unionists retained power would have been difficult so they agreed to have only six counties partitioned. This gave a majority of Protestants of two to one in the new state. This majority, of course, would only keep Unionists in power if every election was fought on a religious platform. A problem is posed when, on the one hand, there are two Protestants to every Catholic, and on the other, when the majority of Protestants are in the working class themselves. What was to stop the working class from uniting and wrecking the Unionist plans of total and everlasting power? Privilege perhaps? Loyalist workers have, throughout the history of the partition, been the victims of the same exploitation as workers in every capitalist country, with one basic difference. This difference is described by Basil Brook-Borough, a Northern Ireland Prime Minister, who said "...I have not a Roman Catholic about my own place.....I would appeal to loyalists therefore, wherever possible to employ good Protestant lads and lassies." So, by giving one section of the working class a certain dubious economic superiority the ruling class effectively split them.

In the 1960's, however, the Catholic population at last saw the possibility of equal rights and they began campaigning peacefully for them. Their main weapon was the civil rights march. If successful these marches would have cut across the sectarian barriers. This would mean that the Unionists could no longer depend on sectarianism to return them automatically to power. The introduction of violence effectively solved this problem - violence introduced by the B Specials, a loyalist police force with loyalist sympathies. Against this the Republicans were protected by the IRA which gained great support among Catholics when they were threatened initially. After a series of incidents stemming from the Apprentice Boys march through Derry in August 1969 and RUC attacks on Bogside the British Army was sent in supposedly to keep the peace. Keeping the peace in this situation means defending the status quo and the British Army in effect took over the job of the disbanded B Specials. As can be seen today they have failed either to keep the peace or return the North to its smooth running sectarian political system.

T.O.M. wants to develop support among the British Labour Movement for the immediate withdrawal of troops. The Irish, it suggests, should be allowed to sort out their own problems. Whatever solution they come to will ultimately depend on British withdrawal and delay, apart from any other consideration, is a postponement of the inevitable. In order to convince people that this is the case, as they believe it to be, the delegation to Ireland will include as great a cross section of the British working class as it is possible to send. This delegation will discuss Northern Ireland with as many Irish Labour groups as is possible in three days and will report its findings back to individual unions in Britain. The Claimants Union Movement should be represented for a very simple reason. We are fighting for the right to live for all working people.

On the practical level this means fighting oppressive aspects of the Social Security system. In general it means educating ourselves on any issue which splits the working class. The SS system exists as it does because of, and not in spite of, these issues. Our delegate's role will be to report on what he sees in Ireland with a view to promoting, firstly, awareness of the present situation in Northern Ireland, and secondly, discussion on the role of troops - many of them former claimants - in that situation.

SCHOOL LEAVERS GUIDE TO SURV

UNEMPLOYMENT IS NOW OVER A MILLION AND A HALF AND SCHOOL LEAVERS ARE HAVING A HARD TIME OF IT ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. THE SOB STORIES IN THE PRESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THE 'CHANCE TO WORK' HAVE BEEN ANSWERED BY THE GOVERNMENT SETTING UP PHONEY JOB CREATION SCHEMES. BUT BOTH SIDES IGNORE MANY OF THE HARSH REALITIES OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: BEING FORCED INTO LOW PAID JOBS WITHOUT ANY TRADE UNION RIGHTS UNDER THE THREAT OF HAVING YOUR BENEFIT STOPPED; BEING FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN ROTTING ON A COUNCIL ESTATE AND THE FALSE PROMISE OF ESCAPE INTO THE BRITISH WAR MACHINE - THE ARMY; BEING FORCED BY THE SS BACK TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS WHO WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU. SCHOOL LEAVERS MUST ORGANISE AROUND SUCH ISSUES AS THE SOCIAL SECURITY TO RESIST THESE PRESSURES.

This brief guide for unemployed school leavers was first published a few months ago by South Shields Claimants Union with the help of local trade unionists and unemployed young people. It is not comprehensive, rather it is meant to clear away a few of the myths.

claiming

If you leave school and can't get a job you should sign on at the labour exchange or youth employment office. As you won't have any insurance contributions yet, you won't be eligible for unemployment benefit. But you will, if you are sixteen or over, be eligible for supplementary benefit. School leavers who leave at fifteen cannot claim in their own right until they are sixteen.

Ask for a form B1 at the labour exchange and take it to the social security.

If you are living at home when you leave school, the SS will try to argue that you can't claim because your parents should support you. This is not true.

Get your parents to write you a note stating that you are now living in their house as a lodger, and that they expect you to pay them, say, £14 a week full board and lodging (more if you think so).

The SS should then pay you this amount plus £3.50 pocket money. What you actually give your parents is of course between you and them.

If your parents are on SS themselves, then the social security will deduct a certain amount from their benefit when you claim (the maximum deduction is one third of the board and lodging charge). Make sure the amount you claim for full board and lodging is enough to cover this deduction and leave you with enough to live on.

Your rights

Do not expect to get your rights simply by asking for them. You will first have to learn what they are and then be prepared to fight for them.

You must be prepared for officials NOT being helpful, NOT giving you the facts, and even giving you FALSE information. Some will make you feel guilty about not having a job.

You will be kept hanging about. DON'T BE PUT OFF! This is part of the system to discourage people from claiming their rights. And if it's tough for you - think what it is like for an elderly or sick person - or a woman with kids.

Remember that the DHSS often make up their own rules. They are NOT the law and can be challenged. If you are not satisfied with your treatment - COMPLAIN TO THE MANAGER. If you are not satisfied with your benefits - ASK FOR A WRITTEN ASSESSMENT. You have a legal right to this. If you are still not satisfied - DEMAND AN APPEAL FORM AND CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CLAIMANTS UNION.

Refusing a job: you do NOT have to take any lousy job offered to you - although they might try to pretend you do. Sometimes they try to get young people to do rotten jobs no one else will touch. You don't have to do it. If the job is not 'suitable', refuse it. If you take a job and find it unsuitable - leave it.

VAL



SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS are available to every person over 16 who has left school. All you need to show is that you are available for work and registered for employment.

If you are registered for employment today there is not much chance of you being offered a suitable job. BUT IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT IF THERE IS NO WORK.

SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS ARE DUE TO YOU AS RIGHT. THEY ARE NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR PARENTS OR THEIR INCOME.

Remember that you're not the only one without a job. There are another one and a half million. The only way you will get a sufficient amount to live on is by united action. This is why the Claimants Union Movement exists. If you want a living wage for yourself (and your friends), and a socially useful job when you eventually get one, join your local Claimants Union. If you are angry because a basic right is being withheld from you - the right to a decent standard of living - join the Claimants Union. Finally, if you feel that your problem cannot be solved in isolation, and that what is needed is united action by all dissatisfied claimants, join the Claimants Union.

You can find out the address of your nearest Claimants Union by contacting any of the addresses of regional co-ordinating claimants unions on the back page of this newspaper. The benefit rates are also on the back page.

IF AS A YOUNG PERSON YOU ARE SUBJECTED TO GOVERNMENT PRESSURE TO JOIN THE ARMED FORCES. IF YOU LIVE IN AN AREA OF VERY HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT YOU WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO FACE SPECIAL RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS DESIGNED TO EXPLOIT THE PRESSURE ON YOU TO GET A TRAINING AND FIND A JOB. DON'T BE CONNED BY ARMY PROPAGANDA ABOUT TRAINING FOR A TRADE". ASK AT THE EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE HOW MANY VACANCIES THEY HAVE FOR FIELD GUN MECHANICS OR THEFTAIN TANK DRIVERS!

SOUTH SHIELDS CLAIMANTS UNION IS PUTTING THE FOLLOWING MOTIONS BEFORE A LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE FOR ACTION AGAINST YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT TO BE HELD IN GATESHEAD ON 18 SEPTEMBER:

This conference demands:

1. The right to socially useful work at trade union rates and conditions. In particular, this conference demands the provision of work for young people which (a) involves proper training and instruction; (b) has a proper career structure; (c) provides security of employment, particularly after an apprenticeship or other period of training; (d) gives provision to attend college for technical and/or general education; (e) utilises the interests and abilities and allows for the development of the full potential of young people; (f) provides facilities for trade unions to recruit young workers and encourage their involvement in trade union affairs.

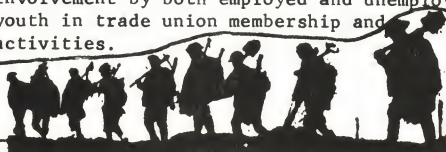
2. A living income for all young people over 16 as a right and in particular the right to social security benefits or training allowances for all over school leaving age.

3. The number of apprenticeships and other training places to be determined on a national and regional basis by the relevant unions involved in that particular sector of industry. All apprentices and trainees to be sponsored by a training board and based at a training centre or technical college.

4. An increase in public investment and control of the productive sector of the economy at national and local level. An increase in public spending at national and local level to improve public services and restore job prospects. An increase in the direct labour force of local authorities.

5. The rejection of the temporary political expediency of the job creation scheme and those PSA schemes which provide jobs without training and training without jobs.

6. That trade unions encourage full involvement by both employed and unemployed youth in trade union membership and activities.



SECTION 13

NOTHING IN SECTIONS 8 TO 10 OF THIS ACT
NOR ANY DETERMINATION UNDER SECTION 12
THEREOF SHALL PREVENT THE PAYMENT OF
BENEFIT IN AN URGENT CASE.

Recently Rose's local Social Security office forced her to spend the weekend without money. She had no food and could not pay her rent.

Rose has been on Supplementary Benefit since May. She has kidney trouble, is of a nervous disposition, and close to retiring. However, she had been drawing money on the basis of weekly medical certificates until an SS visiting officer suggested that she might as well use a monthly certificate. She did this but two weeks later received no giro and was understandably very worried.

When she complained she was told :
"Get another certificate or else sign on for work at the Labour Exchange."
But her monthly certificate wasn't finished yet. "Tough."

This was on Wednesday. Bewildered, Rose waited until Friday hoping to get a payment in the post. Friday's giro, however, was conspicuous only by its absence, and she was absolutely penniless. So she went down for another dose of futility. She was at the office at 9.30am but had to wait two hours just to see the receptionist who promised that the supervisor would see her. Another two hours later the supervisor came out only to offer her the same choice she had had on Wednesday : "Sign on or get a certificate." Either way this meant a walk of several miles. And by now it was too late to take her choice and be back at the office before it closed.

At this point an enterprising claimant, noticing her distraught state, advised her to mention Section 13 (As Section 13 of the Ministry of Social Security Act 1966 stands it is a safety valve which allows for 'overriding discretion in urgent cases'). But when she raised that the supervisor casually dismissed the idea. At this Rose was resigned to the prospect of a weekend fast, and very worried about her landlord: she had never been late with her rent before. That was her prospect for the weekend with the added worry of another trip to the SS on Monday and the possibility of a further refusal. However, the fellow claimant gave her twentyfive pence for her bus fare and contacted the Claimants Union.



Members of East Ham Claimants Union supported Rose on Monday and her problem was soon solved on the presentation of a new certificate. The supervisor then agreed to explain the situation as far as the dictates of confidentiality allowed.

What had the supervisor to say about Rose?
SS: "She had been in on Wednesday and advised as to her situation. She should have acted then."

CU: "But she didn't, due to her bewilderment. So why wasn't section 13 applied on Friday?"

SS: "Section 13 didn't apply in this case."
CU: "Why not?"

SS: "There was a situation pertaining to this case which rendered it inapplicable."

CU: "Which made it necessary that Section 13 should not be applied to a sick woman, thus causing her to dispense with food and to spend the weekend in a state of undue worry?"

SS: "Yes."

CU: "Could the supervisor give a hypothetical case as an example?"

She couldn't think of any offhand.

So then we asked whether Section 13 was published for claimants' benefit in any pamphlet. Not that she knew of.

Was it applied to people without them knowing?: In a roundabout way.

And what percentage of claimants who asked for it got it?: She didn't know - But alot.

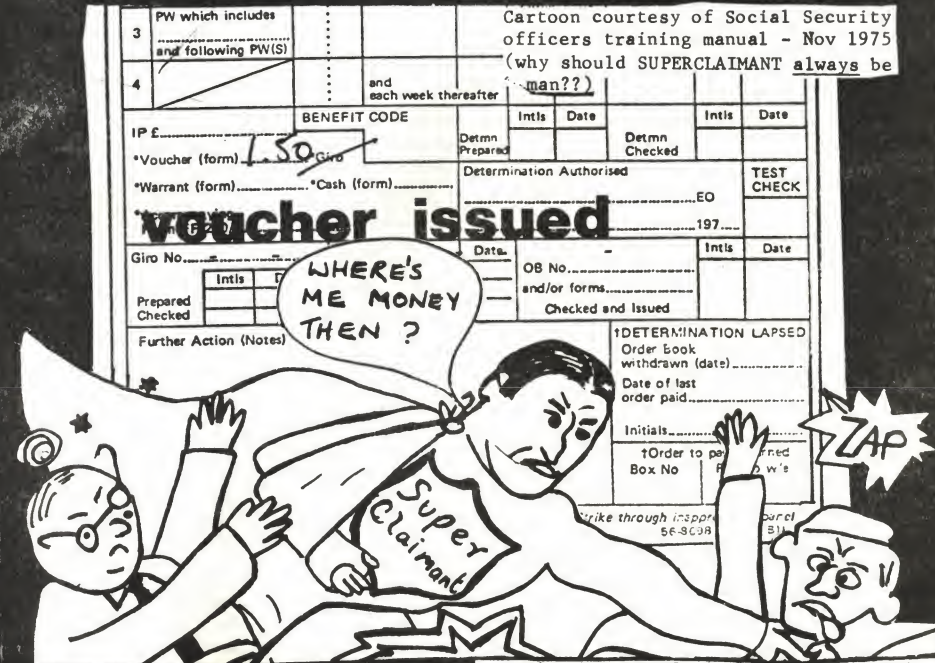
The supervisor then begged leave to depart. She had a queue of people waiting to be paid she explained.

"Or not paid, as the case may be?" we suggested. She was not amused.

Rose's case is not an unusual one. She didn't know her 'rights' as a claimant, and it was only through the intervention of another claimant that she heard of Section 13. Even that didn't matter. The supervisor's excuse of extenuating circumstances is of dubious value. Section 13 claims are usually refused and local offices seem to have a set policy when dealing with emergencies under this ruling. We asked Rose what the supervisor had said when Section 13 was mentioned.

"Oh that," she had said, "That doesn't apply to this office."

Cartoon courtesy of Social Security
officers training manual - Nov 1975
(why should SUPERCLAIMANT always be
man??)



victory!

I am a single parent and I usually have an order book. But when I moved recently I was given a giro each week until a new order book could be issued. One Monday my giro did not arrive. I phoned my local social security office in Hackney and was told that it had been posted the previous Friday. I waited until the second post on Monday and then went down to Sylvester Road. The receptionist told me that my giro would not be considered 'lost' until Tuesday afternoon! After some persuasion he went to check and came back full of apologies, stating that the giro had only been posted that very morning. The delay had been unavoidable because of staff shortage, and the enormous numbers of giros that had to be sent out. I expressed my solidarity with him over the cuts, but said that I didn't think my child would understand that his hunger was caused by Government attacks on the working class. At this the supervisor suggested a food voucher for £1.50p which would be deducted from my benefit the following week. On principle I was against the food voucher, but I knew I would get nothing if I refused this.

Clutching my food voucher I trotted up the road to Sainsbury's. As I drew near my eyes focussed on the 'CLOSED' sign! I had forgotten it was Monday.

On finding my voucher useless there were five things I could do. Go through the whole thing again at the emergency office at Scarborough Street, phone up Regional Office and complain, borrow, starve or steal.

Despite the fact that my victory was short lived...it does show the strange logic employed by social security clerks when it comes to discretionary payments. Unlike Rose, I was paid over the counter, (albeit a voucher) while my giro was in the post. I was not lied to. Nobody was rude to me. The police were not called to drag me out of the office (as they often do with other dissatisfied Claimants). Why is it only articulate people who are treated courteously and given their money? Was it my youthfulness, charm and sex-appeal that won the day? Or was it that he knew I was a Claimants Union activist?

The story has a very happy ending. I appealed against being given a food voucher instead of cash and against having £1.50p deducted from my benefit. Two weeks later I was sent a giro for £1.50p without my appeal ever being heard.

Joan

Letters what do you think?

Dear Editor,

Further to your articles on Facism and Racism in last month's edition of Claimants Unite I would like to raise three points which I believe to be very important.

Firstly, unfortunately a few people think that CU activity can be non-political. This is not so. People frequently come along just to get a few more pounds out of the system. However, many develop a working class solidarity when they see other people in the same boat trying to exist on the breadline. Quite a number of claimants question the role of the Social Security system in perpetuating poverty and inequality, and the role of the state in supporting the bosses. In this way they develop a class consciousness.

As anyone who supports the Charter can join a local Claimant's Union we must support any Claimant whether black or white to get his or her benefits - without condition. But, if a Claimant disagrees with this then he or she must not be allowed to remain a member of the Claimants Union Movement.

The second demand of the Claimants Charter (which all members of the CU movement have to agree with) is for a socialist society in which all necessities are provided free and controlled directly by the people. If claimants agree with this then we should support them unconditionally. This is what our activity in the CU movement is about - this is what makes us a working class organisation.



Some people seem to think that the National Front is a working class organisation - nothing could be further from the truth. Its aim is to gain power on the backs of people misled into hate of a scapegoat. The National Front seeks a scapegoat for the ills of the ailing capitalist economy. The reality is that the British economic system is geared to producing profits for the bosses, and it ensures that 7% of the population continue to own 84% of the wealth. The Social Security system bolsters this by keeping people in poverty.

Finally, instead of complaining that they are ignored by the labour movement, claimants should recognise that the division between employed and unemployed members of the working class is one which has to be overcome. It's up to claimants to initiate moves towards the employed. Only in this way can common issues/interests be raised.

WE NEED A UNITED WORKING CLASS IN ORDER TO FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO LIVE. Dave Wright

SS STAFF TO STRIKE

***** CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE *****

Claimants will be affected by both the strike and the overtime ban. We must actively support both. At the same time, we must ask local CPSA branches to put pressure on the DHSS in other ways. There are actions which they can take which will both help claimants and make less work, eg. refusing to impliment compulsory deductions. Every new vicious rule against claimants handed down from above means more work for the clerks. We have a common enemy - a system which works neither for the benefit of claimants nor for the benefit of its employees, but for the benefit of the bosses and the State.

WE MUST FORGE LINKS WITH CPSA MEMBERS BY SHOWING OUR SUPPORT FOR ANY INDUSTRIAL ACTION THEY TAKE.

equal pay - now!

THE SS HAVE BEEN TAKING THEIR ROLE AS STRIKEBREAKER VERY SERIOUSLY IN WEST LONDON. THE EQUAL PAY STRIKE AT TRICO-FOLBERTH IN BRENTFORD IS THEIR LATEST TARGET.

This strike has been well publicised in the national press - by the sensation seekers because of the use of scab lorries by the bosses with the active assistance of the police to try to break the picket lines, and by the more 'serious' papers because of the official union boycott of the industrial tribunal. The role of the SS in this has never been mentioned - not even by those papers expressing solidarity with the strikers. Although a number of the strikers are married women who are ineligible for SS, there are also a large number of married men and unsupported mothers on strike. They should automatically be entitled to SS payments for their wives and kids. The SS has consistently refused to pay them. The same applies to single strikers claiming Section 13 payments. After nearly four months on strike, only one SS office (Ealing), out of the five different ones Trico strikers have to claim from, has paid out anything - and that was just for one week - when they went back the following week they were thrown out by the police.

Strikers at Trico have been receiving hardship money from their union, AUEW, but just because they are not totally destitute is no excuse for the SS to illegally refuse to pay benefit to strikers' families.

Scabs who had continued working in Brentford and Northampton have now been laid off. They will presumably receive their SS without trouble or delay.

SHARING?

The SS has adopted a new method of assessing joint tenants. This is the result of a High Court ruling - but is not law.

Malcolm Shine shared a flat in Sheffield with three other students. They each paid their rent separately and shared the electricity and gas bills. When Malcolm's claim to be a householder was rejected by an SS appeal tribunal he took out an order of certiorari in the High Court.

The High Court decided: "The better way of administering the Act is to hold that none of the four gets the allowance as being the householder; but that each should be regarded as a lodger contributing towards a householder's commitments. Each should get an allowance in respect of his contribution to the rent; and each may be granted a special addition under para 4(1)(a) to take account of the exceptional circumstances."

The Court showed its bias towards the SS and against claimants by saying: "This seems to me a good instance where the High Court should not interfere with the tribunal's decision, even though it may be said to be erroneous in point of law."

Because of this ruling the SS is now treating everyone who is a joint householder as a non-householder at £8.70 and the difference of £2.20 (extra paid to householders) is split between them. Example: two people paying £3 a week rent each now get £8.70 plus half of £2.20 plus £3 rent = £12.80 instead of £13.90.

One way of getting round this vicious ruling is to claim as a lodger in some one else's house. In this way you can, for example, claim £14 for board and lodging plus £3.50 'pocket money'. But this is not always possible and anyway it is better if this ruling is challenged. Claimants have already won at appeal by pointing out that they are totally independant, cook separately and use separate crockery, etc. Ideally, this ruling should be challenged again in the High Court.

ADJUSTED ASSESSMENT (Overall requirements)
13-66 effective from 14-1-75 (date)

Supplementary Benefit Scale Rates

HIGHER
BENEFITS
NOW
USEFUL
WORK
END
WAGE
SLAVERY

HOUSEHOLDERS	now	(Nov. 76)
Couple - short term	£17.75	(£20.65)
- long term	£21.55	(£24.85)
Single - short term	£10.90	(12.70)
- long term	13.70	(15.70)

NON-HOUSEHOLDERS		
over 18 - short term	8.70	(10.15)
- long term	11.00	(12.60)
16 - 17	6.70	(7.80)
13 - 15	5.60	(6.50)
11 - 12	4.60	(5.35)
5 - 10	3.75	(4.35)
under 5	3.10	(3.60)

PLUS

- 1) rent and rates in full
- 2) mortgage interest, plus an amount for insurance and repairs, etc.
- 3) £1 (£1.20) rent allowance if you are a non-householder



WE DO NOT HAVE A CENTRALISED LEADERSHIP, BUT CUS BELOW ACT AS COORDINATORS FOR THEIR REGIONS. ADDRESSES, PUBLICATIONS AND GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CU MOVEMENT CAN BE OBTAINED BY WRITING, PHONING OR BETTER STILL GOING TO SEE THEM:

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